

RUPEE SERIES



BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

# BHAJA GOVINDAM

C. Rajagopalachari

GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY



## What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Sahitya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which is flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form of attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.





आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

*Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

—Rigveda, 1. 89. i

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BY

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

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# **BHAJA GOVINDAM**

**C. RAJAGOPALACHARI**

**SRI RAMA CHAK**

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## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bhavan's Book University volumes had rare success. About a million and a quarter volumes have been sold in about eleven years. However, there is an insistent demand for the stray volumes which the Bhavan has issued from time to time at a lower price. In order to meet this demand, it has been decided to issue the new One-Rupee Book University Series side by side with the Book University Series.

I hope this new One-Rupee Series will have the same good fortune which the other Series had, of being useful to those who are interested in the fundamental values of Indian Culture, and of reaching out to a wider audience.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,  
Chowpatty Road, Bombay-7  
*Vijaya Dashami*  
September 28, 1963

K. M. MUNSHI

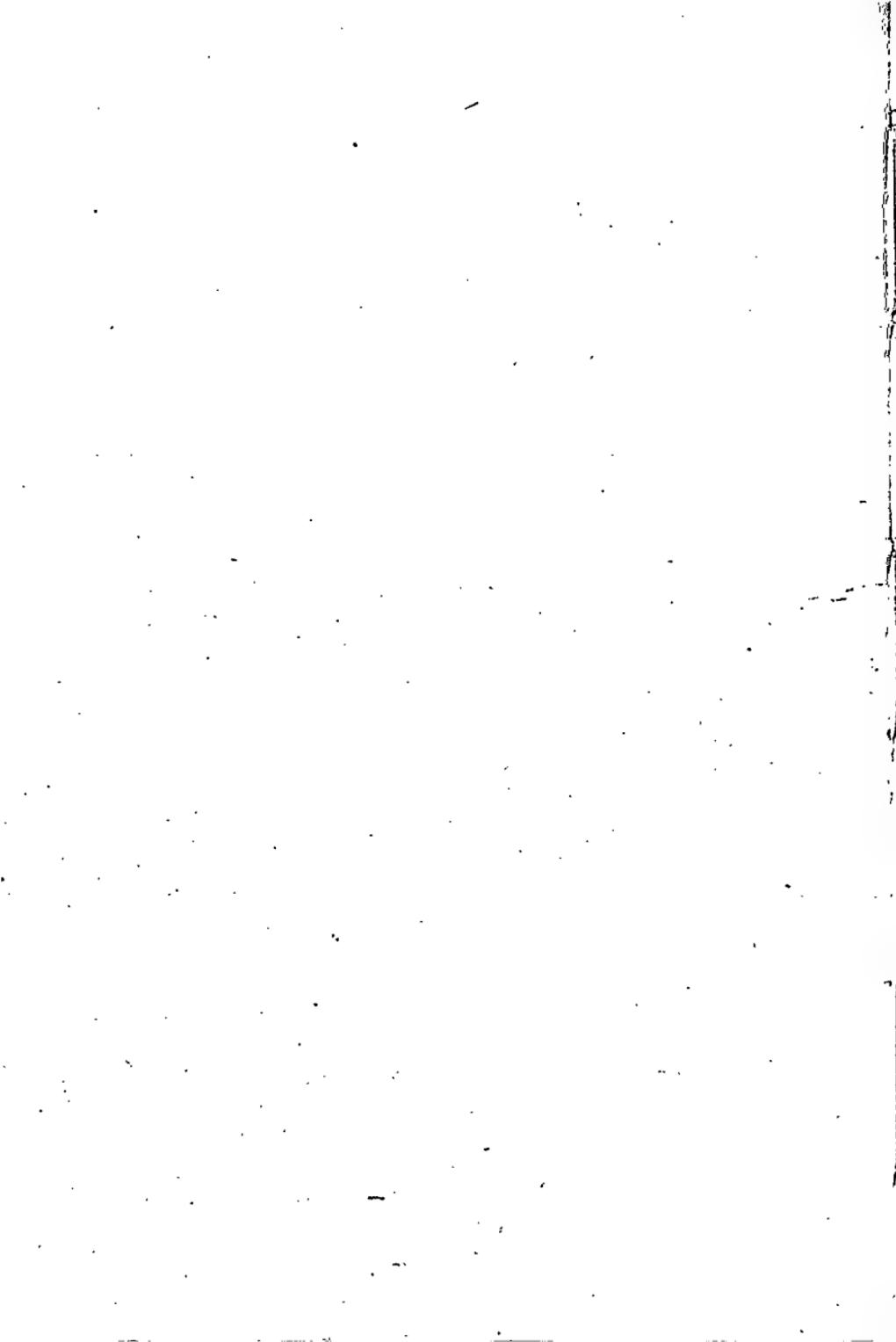


THIS is an English rendering of my Tamil book on Sri Sankara's famous *Bhaja Govindam*. It was first published in serial form in the Tamil journal *Kalki* in 1951. Prof. P. Sankaranarayanan has done the translation exceedingly well and the publishers and I are very grateful to him.

Madras

October 2, 1965.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI



## BHAJA GOVINDAM

Sri Sankara crossed the ocean of Maya as easily as one steps over a small irrigation channel in the field. He wrote a number of *Vedaantic* works for imparting the knowledge of the Self. He composed a number of hymns to foster the sense of devotion in the hearts of men and this I consider to be his greatest service. One of these hymns is the famous "Bhaja Govindam".

Some immature critics of Indian philosophy believe and say that the way of devotion is different from the way of knowledge. The learned employ this distinction to emphasise a particular thesis on which they discourse in different contexts. We should not get confused by this and fail to understand the truth. When intelligence matures and lodges securely in the heart, it becomes wisdom. When that wisdom is integrated with life and issues out in action, it becomes devotion. Knowledge which has become mature is spoken of as devotion. If it does not get transformed into devotion, such knowledge is useless tinsel. To hold and to say that *jnaana* and *bhakti*, knowledge and devotion, are as different from each other as gold is from baser metal is to expose one's ignorance.

Unless the senses are controlled, knowledge will not obtain a foot-hold in the heart. Wisdom will not come into being. How is one to restrain the native impulsion of the senses? The heart cannot be chastened if desires and attachments are not eschewed. Tiruval-luvar is the greatest among the noble souls who spoke

to men with sure knowledge of the way to convert precept into practice. He said:

*Let attachment to the Lord be your one attachment. That attachment will help you to free yourself from all attachments.*

Nammalwar conveyed the same idea when he said:

*If attachments are given up, salvation is a certainty.*

*Develop total attachment to the Lord to give up attachments and attain release.*

The Gita points to the same path in the sloka:

*Vishayaa vinivartante niraahaarasya dehinah rasavarjam rasopyasya param drshtvaa nivartate.*

If attachment is to be completely extinguished and if the mind should be released from it, the mind must be turned towards God. It must be realised that except through devotion to God, there is no other way effectively to restrain the senses. This has been the experience of all those who aspired to control the senses.

*To me who strove against obstinate enemies, not knowing the way to emancipation, He taught the way of love.*

So sang the Saint Maanikkavaachagar. The obstinate enemies here referred to are egoism and desires which are hindrances to true knowledge. They are foolish, obstinate, evil forces.

If Sri Aadi Sankara himself who drank the ocean of knowledge as easily as one sips water from the

palm of one's hand, sang hymns to develop devotion, it is enough to show that knowledge and devotion are one. No other testimony is needed. Sri Sankara has packed into the "Bhaja Govindam" song the substance of all the *Vedaantic* works that he wrote and he has set the truth of the union of devotion and knowledge to melodious music which delights the ear.

### VERSE 1

Our people have heard the "Bhaja Govindam" song and they know it. It is not new to them. Snatches of it are sung now and then. Yet, it is good to read it in full, as a whole poem. It was with great delight that I read all the 31 verses and I was seized with a desire to convey the wealth of its import to others. I am aware that this too is an impulsion of desire. Yet, the desire is irresistible and I shall fulfil it. The wise ones should forgive me.

*Lift the heart up to Govinda, lift the heart up  
to Govinda,  
Lift the heart up to Govinda, O foolish mind!  
When thou art at death's door,  
The rules of grammar which you are trying to  
master will be of no avail.*

भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं  
भज गोविन्दं मूढमते ।  
संप्राप्ते सन्निहिते काले  
नहि नहि रक्षति डुकृञ्जकरणे ॥

The Goddess of Learning Herself speaks through Sankara, beloved of her. Will the sciences that you have learnt, the books that you have read and the skills that you have acquired, will these stand by you when you are at death's door? No, they will not. Save yourself by supplicating to Govinda. When the God of Death gives an ultimatum to you and beckons to you to come to his regions, you cannot argue with him with the aid of the books you have mastered. The only way to escape is to worship Govinda. Book-learning without devotion to God will not avail in the presence of Death.

Of the many delusions of the heart, the pride of learning is one. It is common knowledge that men come to grief going in quest of sensual pleasures and striving after wealth. Sri Sankara says that the desire for fame as a learned man is one such delusion. He utters a warning against wasting all life in mere learning, without tuning the mind to love and worship of God. Of the several delusions, that of knowledge is given a place by Sri Sankara in the very first stanza of the poem.

“Dukring” is an aphorism in the famous grammar of Paanini. “Would you recite the Paanini Sutras when you are confronted by Death?” asks Sankara in ridicule. To convey to the learned that all the knowledge that they might acquire will be in vain without devotion to God, Sri Sankara employed the example of the Paanini Sutra. What he said of Paanini’s Sutras applies to all knowledge devoid of devotion. Sankara was himself a master of Paanini. He spoke about what he thoroughly knew.

'Lift the heart up to Govinda' is the refrain of each stanza of this poem.

## VERSE 2

After first warning against the desire for mere scholarship forgetful of God, and for the renown that it brings, Sri Sankara next speaks about the desire to amass wealth.

Meri ceaselessly crave for Money, for more Money without end. They see that this insatiable desire for Money only breeds pain and sorrow. Yet, they do not learn a lesson from it.

*Fool ! give up this insatiable desire for Wealth,  
Be wise and develop serene content ;  
Be satisfied and happy with the fruits of your  
own labour.*

मूढ जहीहि धनागमतृष्णां  
कुरु सद्बुद्धि मनसि वितृष्णाम् ।  
यल्लभसे निजकर्मोपात्तं  
वित्तं तेन विनोदय चित्तम् ॥

The 'Bhaja Govindam' was sung for everybody including the unlettered man in the street. Wisdom and devotion are the invaluable birthrights of every person. Sri Sankara's teaching is not only for the *Sanyaasins* who have renounced the world. He sings also for the ordinary men who eke out their livelihood with the labour of their hands. 'Yallabhase nijakarmopaatam vittam': 'What you earn by your own labour';

*'tena vinodaya chittam'* : 'enjoy that and be content with it'—that is his counsel.

Do not come to grief by insatiable quest for Money, Money and more Money. That will not be to your good. Look upon it as your enemy. Conquer the lust for Money and rest content. Is it not joy that you seek through Money ? It is folly to grieve over what you do not have without feeling content with what you have earned by honest labour. That is not the way to obtain joy.

*From thoughtless lust of other's goods springs fatal ill;*

*Greatness of soul that covets not shall triumph still*

said Tiruvalluvar.

If one strives for wealth without thought of the consequences, that will lead to disaster. On the contrary, if you develop the mental state of not coveting the wealth in the hands of others, that will be a source of joy. It will bring you victory. The greatest treasure springs from control of desire and not wanting anything. Valluvar speaks of it as 'not-desiring'. Sri Sankara calls it *vitrishna*. Valluvar calls it a species of pride. A victor feels pride when he defeats his enemy. Not wanting anything invests one with similar pride as it is victory over one's cravings.

### VERSE 3

In the third stanza, Sri Sankara speaks about lust. Every one knows that one may conquer other things, but lust is the most intractable of all.

*Enticed by woman's beauty, her bosom and the region of the navel,  
Do not allow yourself to be lost;  
They are only forms of mere flesh,  
Think of them as such every time you look at them.*

नारीस्तनभरनाभीदेशं  
दृष्ट्वा मा गा मोहावेशम् ।  
एतन्मांसवसादिविकारं  
मनसि विचिन्तय वारं वारम् ॥

Do not allow your eyes to stray about here and there. Keep them from forbidden things. Otherwise, says Sri Sankara, you will be caught in the vortex of lust. Yes; women look pretty; but do not be carried away by the external appearance of the body. A woman who belongs to another cannot be yours. To covet what cannot be had leads but to misery. Do not deceive yourself saying that it is harmless pleasure to look at handsome women. Looking at things will not produce satisfaction. It only breeds desire. It is natural for me to seek water. But who will want to be thirsty? If you seek thirst, search for water will follow, would it not? If you do not wish to swerve from the straight path, why do you invite trouble on yourself? If you cast covetous glances on women, it will breed more lust in you, and your firmness of mind

will lose its strength gradually without your knowing it. It is difficult even under natural conditions to maintain your purity. Then, why do you make it more complicated? To feed your eyes is to add to the armoury of your enemy. 'maa gaa mohaavesam' means 'do not get overpowered by lust'. 'Aavesa' implies your mind getting out of your control and going its own way. If your eyes have their way, this is what is in store for you, says Sri Sankara.

You must pause and reflect, says he, as to what is all this beauty which deludes the mind. Reflection will bring steadfastness. What is this thing called "body beautiful?" Is it not mere flesh and skin? After knowing the truth of the matter, is it wise to be taken in by external appearance? Eyes cannot deceive a firm mind with power to discriminate. Lacking that steadiness of mind, we shall be ruined if we let our eyes wander here and there as they please.

We must train ourselves to control the senses. When we acquire this sense-control, we shall feel a sense of freedom in the mind. Tranquillity ensures it. Craving and lust are seeming pleasures concealing a core of inevitable pain.

If the impulsion of the senses is controlled, tranquillity will come into being without any further effort. Then will ensue a joy that will endure. To attain it, first the eyes must be held under check. Such restraint of the senses is prescribed not for being known as a mahatma or a sage. It is essential for one's ordinary welfare and mental peace.

## VERSE 4

After uttering a warning in the first three stanzas against the arrogance of knowledge, the lure of wealth and of sex, Sri Sankara speaks of the nature of life in the fourth stanza. A lotus leaf floats on water. A water drop rests on it credulously feeling quite safe as it dances on the lotus leaf. Sri Sankara says that the joys of life are as unstable as such a water drop. Man's mind skips here and there even as the water drop dances on the lotus leaf. Unceasing desire is its nature. Afflicted by disease and tossed about by attachments, human life is enveloped by grief.

Whatever we seek to obtain in the world is ever mixed with pain. Suppose we get a thing. Immediately we are worried about its safety. Along with acquisition arises the fear that we may lose it, and sorrow attends its loss. The afflictions of the body are numberless. Innumerable are the attachments that prey upon the mind and the anxieties which they breed. The pleasures of such attachments are not real. In very truth, they are only cares and sorrows. Disease and attachments are the terrible crocodiles that threaten to devour our soul. In the manner of the puranic elephant which cried out to Narayana to rescue it from danger, we too should seek refuge in God.

*The water drop on the lotus leaf trembles. So too is life, precarious and unstable. Know it to be in the grip of disease and anxiety, and smitten with sorrow.*

नलिनीदलगतजलभतितरलं  
 तद्वज्जीवितभतिशयचपलम् ।  
 विद्धि व्याध्यभिमानग्रस्तं  
 लोकं शोकहतं च समरतम् ॥

### VERSE 5

“Why do you detract from the joys of life by such statements?”, asks the fool in his simplicity: “look at the kinsmen round me”, says he, “Oh! how much they love me and make me happy! Is all this false or is it a dream? Look at my wife and her love of me; will not that alone compensate for all the pains of life? Ignoring all this, why do you revile at everything calling it all mere folly?”

In answer, Sri Sankara says :

*As long as you are able to earn, so long will your kinsfolk be attached to you. After that, when your body has become infirm, not one will speak to you even in your own home.*

यावद्वित्तोपार्जनसक्त-  
 स्तावन्निजपरिवारो रक्तः ।  
 पश्चाज्जीवति जर्जरदेहे  
 वातां कोऽपि न पृच्छति गेहे ॥

“My son, your dear ones, kinsmen and servants cling to you only so long as you earn. When that is over and when they find that you can be of no further use to them, your kinsmen will disappear into nowhere.” This caution that Sri Sankara utters is not to

find fault with kinsmen. He only points out the usual course of nature. How are the poor kinsmen to blame for it?

Sri Sankara says: "Do not cling to what is not substantial. There is only one thing to which you should attach yourself. Cling to the feet of Govinda. Forgetting it, you come to grief, attaching yourself to other things which are impermanent and unsure. The love that your kinsmen show to you and their interest in your welfare depend on the benefit they can derive from you. When you become old and are no more able to earn, they will get away from you. Do not be deceived seeing people gather round you now." What Sri Sankara says can be found to be true beyond doubt in every place and in every family.

### VERSE 6

"What you say about kinsmen may be true; but take my wife who is with me here. All the love that she bestows on me— is that too a delusion? Is that unsubstantial? Are we not two lives joined together in one body; or more truly, one life in two bodies? Looking on every part of my body as her own, here is my wife living with me always. How then can life be unreal ?" asks the simpleton.

Sri Sankara sings :

*People at home concern themselves about your welfare so long as there is breath in your body. When the life-breath takes leave of your body, even the wife is afraid of that body.*

यावत्पवनो निवसति देहे  
 तावत्पृच्छति कुशलं गेहे ।  
 गतवति वायौ देहापाये  
 भार्या बिश्यति तस्मिन्काये ॥

While the husband is alive, the wife lavishes her affection on him, kisses him all over and says that he is her very life. But the moment the in-going and out-going breath stops, she gets frightened of that very body and calling it a 'corpse', she moves away from it. When there was life she would ask: "How is the pain now? Did you sleep well? Shall I massage your feet?" etc. The moment breathing stops, she is afraid to sit near that same body, the body she used to embrace and kiss passionately. If, by any chance, the corpse should suddenly sit up, would she not run away howling? Attachments and associations of the body are of this nature.

Sri Sankara does not advise abandoning one's wife. Married life must go on. But he warns against undue attachment to that life. Go about your life knowing the truth about things. Do not unnecessarily come to grief mistaking the false for the true. What is a wife? What is a son? What is the connection between your life and theirs? The bonds of the body subsist only so long as life lasts. That is what Sri Sankara says.

One must perform the duties of a householder. But, a wise man will act realising the limitations of everything. It is profitless to mistake the fleeting for the permanent. If one acts with a proper understanding of things, one would have less cause for grief.

## VERSE 7

*Childhood passes away in play. Thoughts of love engage youth and the mind goes after maidens. The old man is worried about the fate of his children and his wife. His whole life is spent in some kind of anxiety or other. At no stage does a man turn his mind to God.*

बालस्तावत्क्रोडासक्त-  
स्तरुणस्तावत्तरुणीसक्तः ।  
वृद्धस्तावच्चन्तासक्तः  
परे ब्रह्मणि कोऽपि न सक्तः ॥

At successive stages of life, man is engrossed in play or in sex-love, in family cares and in inconsequential anxieties. Never does he turn to the quest for true wisdom. Sri Sankara bewails this failing in every man, and is concerned to find a remedy for it.

Life is wasted in the quest of what is transient and deluding. Though aware of the delusion, at no period of his life does a man seek to know the Real.

## VERSE 8

*Who is your beloved? Who is your son?  
Very strange is this family bond.*

*Whose are you? Who are you? Whence did you come, Brother mine, reflect on the truth of it all.*

का ते कान्ता कस्ते पुनः  
 संसारोऽयमतीव विचिन्तः ।  
 कस्य त्वं कः कुत आयात्—  
 स्तत्त्वं चिन्तय तदिह भ्रातः ॥

What is the permanent relation between the wife whom you love and yourself? You adore your son passionately; who is he?

The course of worldly life is a great mysterious enigma. Whose property are you? Whence did you come? Where were you previously? Did you come to existence by yourself? What is the bond between the persons whom you love and worry about and yourself? Why all this anxiety and attachment? Reflect on all this for a while and your delusions will vanish. You will be at peace. Do not confuse the perishing body with the imperishable soul; do not be a victim of erroneous attachments. Save yourself from the sorrow of such delusion.

Sri Sankara says that this is a strange world. By 'strange' is meant 'an inscrutable secret'. It also connotes an element of beauty and wonder. This world is a composite of wonderful beauty and awe-inspiring enigma, and it captivates the eye by its myriad colours. Of beauty, there is enough and more. But the relation between this world and yourself is transient.

## VERSE 9

Association with good and enlightened men provides occasion for the practice of withdrawal from desire and attachment. Every one is aware of the effects of company. It is more effective than mere precept. Calmness and equanimity are the results of good company. As desires and attachments become less and less, the delusion which preys upon life diminishes.

Desire and delusion warp the mind and cloud the understanding obstructing the power to discriminate between the good and the bad, between the lofty and the low. Delusion is the name given to the state where one is unable to distinguish between the true and the false. Desire and attachment are the cause of this delusion. As these diminish, one gradually gets free from this delusion. When it vanishes completely, the mind ceases to be agitated and becomes steady. When the mind becomes steady, internal purity ensues. Purity is *Sivam*, Divinity Itself. When that state is reached, it is salvation, that is, *jeevanmukti*.

Maanikkavaachagar sang:

'My bonds He cut, made me His own, cleansed my foulness. No trace of it was left. Thus, was given the final goal of His grace.' That 'final goal' is *jeevanmukti*.

*The company of the good roots out all attachment. When there is no attachment, there is no delusion. When delusion vanishes, the mind is steady. A steady mind makes for jeevanmukti.*

सत्सङ्गत्वे निस्सङ्गत्वे  
 निस्सङ्गत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।  
 निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलचित्तं  
 निश्चलचित्ते जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

As attachment decreases, infatuation is reduced. Where there is no infatuation, one attains equanimity and divine peace. These come one after the other like the leaf, flower and fruit of a tree. Like the good, the elements of evil too appear in similar succession. To attain salvation at the end, one must start with the company of the devotees of God. One must give up living with unbelievers. Those who are not devout need not be derided; nor should they be hated. They also must receive the grace of God. After the manner of the saint of Vadavoor, who cried: 'My God filled my heart with devotion', our hearts too must melt in gratitude to God.

We must grieve for those who are not blessed with devotion. To despise them would be arrogance. The devotion that God has endowed us with, will vanish before arrogance. The *Idu*,\* a great Vaishnavite classic in Tamil, has it as follows: "One can know for oneself if one is a true Vaishnava. If a man is genuinely distressed at the sufferings of others, then it may be assumed he is a godly person. If, on the other hand, he gloats over the sufferings of another, saying: 'he deserves this and much more,' then he is not a true Vaishnava."

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\*I pronounced like *ea* in *eat*.

## VERSE 10

The sorrows of life will cease of their own accord upon the dawn of the knowledge of the self. That knowledge is the only remedy for sorrow. And, it is an unfailing remedy. There is no doubt about this, says Sri Sankara:

*When youth is gone, where is room for sport in lust? Where is the lake when the water has dried up? When wealth is gone, where are the kinsfolk? When the Truth is known, where is the worldly bond?*

वयसि गते कः कामविकारः  
शुष्के नीरे कः कासारः ।  
क्षीणे वित्ते कः परिवारो  
ज्ञाते तत्त्वे कः संसारः ॥

Sorrow and suffering afflict only so long as there is delusion in the mind. When delusion vanishes giving place to wisdom, sorrow and suffering disappear like mist before the sun. The only remedy for delusion is wisdom. To secure it, good conduct, character and devotion are necessary. In the absence of these, mere knowledge got by reading books will not give wisdom. That is the difference between learning and knowledge of the self.

As old age creeps on, acts of lust vanish of their own accord. As water dries up, the lake loses even its form. As one becomes poor, one's kinsmen disappear into nowhere. All these are most certain; equally certain is the disappearance of life's troubles upon the dawn of wisdom, says Sri Sankara. Even

the most persistent sorrows and cares of men will be cured by true knowledge of self. When they disappear, man's native powers will assert themselves and go into fruitful channels. They will not be spent in futile cares.

Knowledge of the self is the true medicine which will give one soul-strength. It cures one of cares and anxieties and spurs one to the good life. If even after studying the *saastras*, one's cares have not been extinguished, it means that they have not been read with devotion.

### VERSE 11

The next song says:

Do not be proud of your youth and health. Do not be vain and say: "I have wealth, kinsmen, friends and also servants to do my bidding. What more do I need?" When fortune begins to frown on you, all these will disappear in a trice. All your arrogance will change in a moment into shame. Realise the instability of things and lead your days with due humility. Give up desires and attachments, do your duties and then seek knowledge of the self. A wise man will tread the path of renunciation as a result of his wisdom.

*The pleasure and riches of worldly life are delusive appearances. Realising that they are a passing show, prepare for the way of renunciation. The wise have warned that it requires maturity of mind to take the path of renunciation. The renunciation of the immature will only make them objects of ridicule.*

मा कुरु धनजनयौवनगर्व  
 हरति निमेषात्कालः सर्वम् ।  
 मायामयमिदमखिलं हित्वा  
 ब्रह्मपदं त्वं प्रविश विदित्वा ॥

What is meant by maturity? It is the state of mind which looks on wealth and fame as mere trivialities. One must not look upon strangers differently from kinsmen and friends. Sexual pleasures must be completely avoided. *Sanyaasa* by itself does not help to get rid of one's failings. The failings must be got rid of before adopting *sanyaasa*. One should not deceive oneself that by merely uttering the mantras of renunciation and donning the ochre robe, one can easily pursue the way of renunciation and self-knowledge. To do so would be like eating over much to stimulate digestion. The result will be only dyspepsia. It is he who has no flaws left in his character that can think of taking *sanyaasa*. Renunciation is the top rung of the ladder of life and the earlier steps have to be ascended before one sets foot on the last step.

## VERSE 12

Let worldly life be an appearance or a reality. Sri Sankara does not object to our enjoying life, using our talents in approved ways adhering to Dharma. If one seeks pleasure in wrong ways, the joy that one may get will be far outweighed by the sorrows one must

suffer. If a man leads a dharmic life, he must submit to sorrows as willingly as he accepts pleasures. Both must be borne with equanimity. If we lay to heart what Sri Sankara tells us, we shall acquire the courage to bear the sorrows of life unperturbed. A man may escape all other hardships, but death and the parting which it imposes are inevitable. Either the wife loses her husband or the husband suffers the grief of separation from his wife. Other sorrows too we cannot escape. To bear these with fortitude, one must acquire the true knowledge that Sri Sankara urges us to acquire.

Numerous are the calamities we have thus to bear. There are those who say: Why bother about all this *Vedaanta*? Let us go through life somehow. But when calamities and difficulties assail them, they suffer uncontrollable grief. Therefore, it is good to realize the truth that life is a mixture of joy and sorrow. Sorrow is the obverse of joy. You cannot have the one without the other in the world. Sorrow cannot be eliminated outright. Only, we must acquire the strength of mind to bear it. To be able to do it, one must acquire true knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge which Sri Sankara, the Sanyaasin, insists on is indispensable even for an ordinary householder's comfortable life.

*Day and night, morn and eve,  
Winter and spring come and dance and go.  
Thus while Time sports, life fleets unobserved,  
Yet desire does not leave us, but holds us in its  
grip.*

दिनमपि रजनी सायं प्रातः  
शिशिरवसन्तौ पुनरायातः ।  
कालः क्रीडति गच्छत्यायुः  
तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशावायुः ॥

Like a beautiful damsel, Time dances on the stage of life. Every step of hers, night and day, summer and winter, every clap of her lovely palms, quietly cuts off the days of your life. As the Kural has it, every day is but the sawing off of a slice from your life; it is nothing but that, though it seems beautiful.

While speaking about the *Maayaa* of the world, Sri Sankara also portrays its beauty. Is there a more enchanting scene in the world than dawn and evening? The star-spangled sky at mid-night is a splendour the like of which there is nothing else. The beauty of the seasons is a delight. But what are all these? They are just a relentless sawing off of your life-span. We know this; yet we do not give up the desires of the flesh. What folly?

### VERSE 13

Is there none to advise you? Even when death is imminent, why do you turn your thoughts to your wife and to your possessions? Won't you strive for wisdom at least in your last days? A little effort that way even for a brief moment will bring great gain.

*Crazy man! Why do you bother about your wife and your wealth? Know you not that in all the three worlds the company of the good is the only boat which will take you across the sea of life?*

का ते कान्ता धनगतचिन्ता  
वातुल कि तव नास्ति नियन्ता ।  
क्षणमपि सज्जनसंगतिरेका  
भवति भवार्णवतरणे नौका ॥

We must reflect on the attachments that bind us to the world and examine them carefully. Take the case of the wife. What is the connection between her soul and mine? Why should one depend on the other? What is the connection between her whom I call my wife, in the present life and my past or future lives? Do souls have kinship? Why this limitless bother about a transitory connection of a single life? What is the measure of a single life in endless eternity? Is it not a trifling moment? Once you are dead, what is the connection between your wife and yourself? Why bother about it? Should you not cease engaging in profitless thoughts?

When this is the case with the wife, what needs be said about wealth? It is something inanimate. What is the relation between you and this wealth once you have given up the body? Why do you worry about it?

Even if the truth is seen, delusion persists and works havoc on the mind. It is to banish that delusion that Sri Sankara sang the 'Moha Mudgara.' The traditional name for the song of Bhaja Govindam is Moha Mudgara i.e. the heavy hammer that crushes and destroys *moha* or delusion.

## VERSE 14

*The ascetic with the matted locks, the man with the shaven head, he who has pulled out his hair, the man of the kaashaya robe, they have eyes but fail to see. All these are disguises to cheat the world and fill the belly.*

जटिलो मुण्डो लुभितकेशः  
काषायाम्बरबहुकृतवेषः ।  
पश्यन्नपि च न पश्यति मूढो  
हयुदरनिमित्तं बहुकृतवेषः ॥

Renouncing is not a matter of external show. It is a victory that has to be won in the mind. But what is it that we see in the world? We see the shaven head or the long matted hair and such other outward signs. If the desires burning in the heart are not quenched, these external forms mean nothing. The show of renunciation is quite often a means to fill the belly. 'Why this vain show? Give it up', says Sri Sankara. Tiruvalluvar says:

"There is no need for shaving the head or for the long matted locks if what the world condemns is given up sincerely."

We are familiar with *sanyaasins* who renounce in haste and regret at leisure. Shortly after taking to the ochre robe, they get involved in the world and are the victims of anger and anxiety. There are many who adopt *sanyaasa* but hunt for power and influence as before and who use their *sanyaasa* as a means for that

purpose. All this is extremely sinful; they are heinous acts that will bring *sanyaasa* itself into disrepute. The *sanyaasins* may be of all sorts and kinds; but the *ideal of sanyaasa* is a thing of great value stressed by our ancients. There is no doubt about it. Unfortunately, *sanyaasa* loses its prestige as it is adopted by not a few before qualifying for it.

### VERSE 15

Giving up or renunciation, is the substance of *sanyaasa*. It does not lie in external forms. To give up truly is to abandon the desires that work up the mind. Sri Krishna deals with this point in the third chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* in clear terms. Whatever one may be engaged in, that activity should be governed by the spirit of renunciation in the heart. The mind should be pure whatever the external form; and given the will, it can be kept pure.

This has been declared after careful research by our great spiritual teachers who were pure, and competent, and truly wiser than us. They have told that we would become pure in heart and mind if we meditated on God with love and devotion in whatever form, as father, as mother, as teacher or in other aspects closer to our heart. There cannot be the spirit of renunciation without devotion to God. The songs of Saint Maanikkavaachagar bear this out. We are in no way wiser than he was. There is no *Vedaantic* truth that he did not know. He literally wept for God,

he yearned for Him from the recess of his heart. Like him, we too should pine for God, cry out for Him as our Father, Mother, and as even closer than these. If we do so, we will get enlightenment in some measure and the power to ward off desires. The state of renunciation cannot be attained merely by book-learning if there is no devotion to God.

Sri Sankara bewails that men do not give up desires even when age has rendered them incapable of enjoyment.

*The body has got worn out; the head has turned all grey; the mouth has lost all its teeth. The old man goes about leaning on a stick; yet, he hugs to himself a bundle of desires.*

अङ्गं गलितं पलितं मुण्डं  
दशनत्रिहीनं जातं तुण्डम् ।  
बृद्धो याति गृहोत्था दण्डं  
तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशापिण्डम् ॥

### VERSE 16

*Sitting before the fire or with the sun at the back, sleeping at night with the knee tucked under the chin, stretching out his palm for alms and living homeless under the trees; yet, he has not freed himself from the desires that grip him.*

अग्रे वन्हिः पृष्ठे भानुः  
रात्रौ चुबुकसर्पतजानुः ।  
करतलभिक्षस्तरुतलवासः  
तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशापाशः ॥

The man is old and decrepit. He shivers all over unable to stand the cold. He sits with his back to the sun for warmth. If he can get a fire, he sits by it to warm himself. At night, lying down to sleep, he is not able to stretch his legs out. He is not sure of his meal on the morrow. And yet, his desires have no limit. The attachments and desires which bind a man to the things of the world have enormous power. These devils hold sway over him unabated even when he has become weak in every limb. It is not possible to fight and vanquish them by one's unaided effort. Seek the help of God and pray to Him to stand by you. Then you will triumph over them. Don't ask: "Should God come Himself for all this? Is it right to invoke Him for this?" This power will accrue to you as a result of your seeking God's help. You will then be able to withstand those desires. There is nothing to detract from the majesty of God when we call Him to our aid. In fact, He is pleased when we pray and petition to him. Subjugation of the natural passions and the victory of the soul cannot be achieved without His aid.

### VERSE 17

All religions and creeds stress the need for true knowledge and wisdom.

*A man may bathe in the holy Ganga or the sea. He may observe every austerity; he may make gifts lavishly. Yet, all religions agree that none of these will get him liberation even in a hundred lives if he does not acquire true knowledge.*

कुरुते गङ्गासागरगमनं  
 व्रतपरिपालनमथवा दानम् ।  
 ज्ञानविहीनः सर्वमतेन  
 मुक्तिं न भजति जन्मशतेन ॥

A person may do pilgrimage to holy places, bathe in the sea at Rameswaram and go through a hundred vows and austerities. But if he has not attained *jnaana*, he cannot get rid of the great Delusion. These holy baths and austerities will bear fruit only if the mind is pure and the heart is filled with devotion. Else, they are all in vain.

When it is said that one without knowledge cannot attain liberation it is not knowledge arising from book-learning that is meant. It refers to the state of mind that is free from attachments. Book-learning is one thing; true knowledge is quite another. A person may be well read; he may have command of many languages; he may be an adept in making discourses wonderfully. Yet, if he is the victim of delusion and attachment, he cannot be said to have acquired *jnaana*. In accordance with the Kural teaching:

“As one by one, you detach yourself from the things of the world, you save yourself from pain in respect of it.”

One should get rid of the attachments by degrees. *Jnaana* is not a short cut enabling us to bypass the need for giving up our desires. The state of mind free from desires, is what is known as *jnaana*. Some people hold that *jnaana* is a separate and superior means to liberation. This is a delusion. If desires are vanquished and eliminated, *jnaana* will arise of

itself. One who has not got rid of his desires cannot become a *jnaani*. As in a pond, the mire sinks down to the bottom and the water at the top becomes clear, so too, if desires go, the heart will become pure and true knowledge will come into being. Bathe in the Ganga with this true knowledge; bathe in the Setu with this true knowledge; observe austerities with this *jnaana*; make gifts with this *jnaana*; this is what Sri Sankara says. If the duties that you fulfil and the vows that you observe should bear fruit, then the mind too should operate along with the body. You must function with a pure mind and a pure heart. Whatever is done merely as a bodily act, apart from the mind, be it a vow or a pilgrimage, will be in vain.

There are examinations at school which a pupil can pass by cramming his text. One can score in them by the power of memory. But for the knowledge that Sri Sankara and the Gita speak about, mere memory of holy verses will be of no use. To expound the truth in faultless language is to no purpose. How do you go through your life? How do you bear your griefs? These are the tests of *jnaana*.

### VERSE 18

*Who can disturb a man's happiness, if he can be happy, living in the open halls of temples or under the trees, lying on the bare ground and wrapped in skins, giving up every possession and enjoyment?*

सुरमन्दिरतरुमूलनिवासः  
 शत्या भूतलमजिनं वासः ।  
 सर्वपरिग्रहभोगत्यागः ।  
 कस्य मुखं न करोति विरागः ॥

“There is no possession so great as non-desire either in this world or in the worlds beyond” sang Tiruvalluvar.

Happiness is an internal state of the mind. It does not reside in an external object or in the physical body. Sri Sankara speaks from experience. This is an assurance to those who grieve caught up in worldly things and are afraid to give them up. There need be no doubting question as to how to give up and about the nature of the pleasure that will follow. One should not let one's mind be tossed about in quest of desires that bring unhappiness. Sri Sankara says that by no other means can one find the bliss that one can find through renunciation. You must accept this as true when one so great as Sri Sankara declares it. He has experienced the bliss of renunciation and preaches it to others.

### VERSE 19

*When one is practising Yoga, or enjoying some pleasures, whether in company or in solitude, if one's mind finds delight in communion with the Supreme Brahman, such a one is indeed truly happy.*

योगरतो वा भोगरतो वा  
 सङ्गरतो वा सङ्गविहीनः ।  
 यस्य ब्रह्मणि रमते चित्तं  
 नन्दति नन्दति नन्दत्येव ॥

Pleasure is a state of the mind. The satisfaction springing from sense-enjoyment is pleasure of one kind. But the bliss of felt union with God is something different. It is a joy that knows no qualification or diminution. Sri Maanikkavaachagar says to his heart as to a honey-bee:

“O, my good bee, sip not the honey from little flowers and waste your energy. There is the Divine Dancer for you to meditate on or see His form in the temples. What is the use of the sensual pleasures of the flesh. The flower that is God exudes the honey of supreme bliss. Drink that honey, O my heart. When you sing His praise, my very bones melt in the honey of the bliss that flows from Him.”

In this stanza, Sri Sankara repeats the word *nandati*, “dances”, thrice. It shows that the bliss that he speaks of has no intermission and that it is firm and constant. The mind can turn to God and be fixed on Him though engaged in worldly concerns and even if one is not immersed in meditation or has not taken to *sanyaasa*. Great men have experienced such bliss. That is why God is spoken of as “a hill which gives unceasing bliss.”

It is immaterial in what form and by what name devotees offer devotion to God. Theological differences do not affect the process. The devotee’s heart will be moved by the form and manner of devotion to

which he has been accustomed. That the heart should melt is the important thing. That alone will bear fruit. If the heart does not melt, any amount of devotional practices for whatever length of time will be futile. The differences of Siva and Vishnu are only in the name. In their excess of devotion, some persons sing of Vishnu as subordinate to Siva and a like excess makes others sing of Siva as subordinate to Vishnu. It only shows the fervour of the aspirant's bhakti: it affects neither Siva nor Vishnu. The traditional names are only different ways of calling the same God. There is no need for us to be confused by all this. The *Tiruvaachakam* of the saint of Vadavoor, the *Tiruvaaimozhi* of Nammaazhwaar, and the *Bhaja Govindam* of Sri Sankara are all in praise of the same Supreme Being beyond all differences. *Kadavul* is the Tamil word for the Supreme Being. The varieties of form in which God is conceived in the mind do not matter even as differences of name do not matter. The same God has different forms. A devotee chooses to worship that form which gives him joy and chooses the name by which he would refer to Him.

"Of Him who has no name or form, we sing in thousand sacred names and we clap our hands in joy".

So sang Maanikkavaachagar. And again:

"He is my rare ambrosia; my Sire; our God; the consort to Himavaan's daughter, Her husband, son, sire and brother. Sing ye of our Lord."

This too is from *Tiruvaachakam*. Siva has Umaa for His consort. He is also spoken of as Her son, as Her Father and as Her brother! It is by the right

of their devotion that some persons praise Vishnu as the greatest God and others give that place to Siva. This need not confound us. We too may adopt any form of God that we prefer for our devotion.

“Though my house and home be ruined, I ask not for bliss of Indra or Vishnu but Thee though I be consigned to hell”.

—Maanikkavaachagar.

What is the significance of such songs? It is not to think derogatorily of gods other than the one enthroned in one's heart. It is a method to augment the devotion welling up in the heart and to canalise it in a particular direction. Speaking in apparent disparagement of other gods is only for this purpose. It does not indicate a sense of difference nor does it spring from ignorance. How can men of such superior spiritual wisdom be guilty of such ignorance? “Knowing that thou art both Vishnu and Brahma....” said Sri Maanikkavaachagar. “The divine form of Lakshmi's Lord must be meditated upon”, sang Sri Sankara. “He who resides in the heart of those who ceaselessly pine for Him, whose consort has annexed half His body” sang Maanikkavaachagar. Both of them spoke identically to the same purpose. One had the form of Vishnu in mind and the other was thinking of Siva. But it is the same Supreme Being in whatever form He is conceived. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa firmly realised this truth and taught it to his disciples.

## VERSE 20

*A little study of the Bhagavad Gita, drinking a drop of Ganga Water, a casual worship of Murari—these will save you from debate with Death.*

भगवद्गीता किञ्चिदधीता  
गङ्गाजललवकणिका पीता ।  
सकृदपि येन मुरारिसमर्चा  
क्रियते तस्य यमेन न चर्चा ॥

Sri Sankara says: "You will be liberated if you worship Muraari, that is, Govinda, with devotion at least now and then." The great Acharya who had attained the highest wisdom has blended devotion, wisdom and austerities in this stanza. *Kinchit adheetaa:* read at least a little bit; that is enough, says he. 'Drink just a drop of Ganga water', he says. The Gita too is like Ganga water. It is enough if a small part of it is read. Is it necessary to drink the entire Ganga? Is it possible to do so? No. Think of Govinda at some moment or other. That is enough. You need not then live in fear of death, says he. The pious Tamil devotees have sung about God in rapture as 'exceedingly accessible to His devotees', 'as one who overlooks the defects and appreciates the virtues', 'as He who cures the ills of those who bow to Him', and 'as He who is sweet like the music of the veena.'

## VERSE 21

*Born again and again,  
Dying over and over again,  
And getting into a mother's womb over and  
over again.  
It is hard to cross over this ocean of repeated  
life and death.  
Save me from it, merciful Lord!*

पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं  
पुनरपि जननीजठरे शयनम् ।  
इह संसारे बहुदुस्तारे  
कृपयात्पारे पाहि मुरारे ॥

This is Sri Sankara's next song.

Let us beg for His grace; He will surely protect us. He will surely take us across the ocean of births and deaths. If Sri Sankara himself who reached the heights of spiritual knowledge cried out that nothing can protect except His grace, what can men of little knowledge have to say? Let us worship Him, and seek His grace. We shall be saved. Why think of other means? That is what the Gita also declares:

सर्वधर्मान्यरित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।  
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

*Giving up all paths, surrender yourself completely to Me. I shall save you from every sin, do not grieve.*

*Maa suchah* means 'do not grieve'. This is the declaration of the Lord Himself not only to Arjuna, but to entire mankind.

## VERSE 22

Sri Sankara sings of God-intoxication and the bliss of the men that have received the light:

*Clad in rags picked from the street, treading the path beyond good and evil, not caring to earn merit by good and never doing evil, lost in meditation, the Yogi revels in the Supreme and plays sometimes like a child, and sometimes behaves like one mad.*

रथ्याचर्पटविरचितकन्थः  
पुण्यापुण्यविवर्जितपन्थः ।  
योगी योगनियोजितचित्तो  
रमते बालोन्मत्तवदेव ॥

A child is innocence itself; it knows no evil. A mad man cares not for the world. A yogi's heart is a blend of these attitudes. It is this that Sri Sankara refers to when he says 'like a child, like one mad'.

Tamil saints like Pattinattaar have danced in ecstatic experience of this divine joy and poured forth their heart in song. Can every one attain this state? No. To seek to attain this bliss without maturity of heart and mind will end in mere external show. This state of Yogic bliss arises spontaneously in fulness of time. If the means to it are gone through effectively, the result will follow as a matter of course. The early steps relate to the development of faith, to wean the mind from becoming a prey to the deceitful senses. There is no other way than this to cleanse oneself of sins committed. If one pursues the path of devotion, the impurities of the mind get washed out. The purified

soul is all that is auspicious. It realises itself. Then the surpassing joy like unto that of a child or one that is mad will dawn by the grace of God. This is what saint Maanikkavaachagar has sung in his *Acchopadi-kam*.

### VERSE 23

We sleep in the night and dream. In the dream we experience many hardships and cares. During the dream we suffer much pain but on waking, all that vanishes and we feel great relief. Sri Sankara compares life to a dream and says that the cares and pains of life are like the cares and pains in a dream.

*Who are you? Who am I? Who is my mother, and who is my father? Reflect on this. You will then realise that the world and its cares are but the cares and anxieties of a dream, and you will be able then to free yourself from that dream.*

कस्त्वं कोऽहं कुत आयातः  
कीं मे जननी को मे तातः ।  
इति परिभावय सर्वमसारं  
विश्वं त्यक्त्वा स्वप्नविचारम् ॥

We speak of something as 'I', 'I', and suffer great fear, difficulty and anger. What is that 'I'? 'Reflect', says Sri Sankara. 'The distinction of 'You' and 'I' subsist only so long as there is the body. Who were they previously before they took birth who now endear themselves to you as 'father' and 'mother'? Who were you previously? Prior to this birth, in how many

wombs had you been confined? Do you see all those mothers now? If you saw them, would you feel love for them? What is that Substance from which you have now separated and taken your shape? All the things that you see in the world are the illusory forms of that *one* Substance. You are not able to see that *one* Substance; but what you see are its illusory forms; and you feel drawn to them or repelled by them by your love and hate, and you are caught up in this delusion. Wake up from this dream, open your eyes and try to see the One Reality behind them all.' 'Then', says Sankara, 'your cares will vanish. The mirage projected by your *karma* will disappear before *bhakti*. You will find liberation; worship Govinda and attain salvation'.

#### VERSE 24

With whom do you get angry? Why do you grieve in vain imagining enmity in your heart? Is not every living creature the temple of Govinda? Does not the same soul dwell in your body and in that of the brother that you fight against?

*In you, in me, elsewhere, there is but one Vishnu. Unable to bear with me, you get angry with me in vain. See your self in all things. Give up this false sense of difference from other beings everywhere.*

त्वयि मयि चान्यत्रैको विष्णु—  
धर्यथं कुप्यसि मध्यसहिष्णुः ।  
सर्वस्मन्नपि पश्यात्मानं  
सर्वत्रोत्सूज भेदज्ञानम् ॥

## VERSE 25

*Don't think in terms of friend or foe; or brother or cousin. Don't waste your energy in enmity or friendship. If you wish soon to realise the Supreme, be of equal mind with every one.*

शत्रौ मित्रे पुत्रे बन्धौ  
मा कुरु यत्नं विग्रहसन्धौ ।  
भव समचित्तः सर्वत्र त्वं  
वाञ्छस्यचिराद्यदि विष्णुत्वम् ॥

Friendship and enmity only perpetuate the impediment of attachment. From attachment flow grief and delusion. One must attain liberation by gradually reducing and getting rid of attachments. So, in our dealings with everybody, we should develop equanimity and try to see the Divinity in everyone and everywhere. One must cultivate a sense of impartiality. This will lead to what Sri Sankara speaks of as *Vishnutva*. It leads to salvation.

One may ask: Is this possible? Can one become free from love and hatred alike? Even were it possible for the *sanyaasins*, can it be achieved in worldly life? Oh, how many occasions come about for anger! Can one forget or ignore them? True, it is difficult to forget causes of anger. It is no use to pretend to be calm externally when anger burns inside in the heart. It is difficult to forget; yet, Sri Sankara provides a remedy for it. One should constantly remind oneself that Govinda resides in every life. The way to control and overcome anger and aversion is to keep telling ourselves: How numerous are the

lapses I have been guilty of! How many are the evils that lodge in my heart concealed from the gaze of others! Others too are like me, aren't they? Their lapses too like mine are the sport of God. Govinda sports in various ways. What avails my anger or my grief? To weed one thing out from the mind it must be filled with something else. It is for this that one is told to lift one's heart up to Govinda.

'Countless are my defects and sins; to expiate them and to make myself good, it is urgent that I should cry out to Govinda. Shall I waste my time thinking of the vices of others? To do so gives no pleasure; it only adds to my misery. And the hours glide in purposeless waste. I must quickly go about purifying my heart. And that will be possible only if I take refuge in Govinda'. With this determination, says Sri Sankara, after you have done your duties whenever you have the time, day or night, lift your thoughts up to Govinda. Any purpose can be achieved only if one adopts the means for it: Contemplation of Govinda is the most effective means for purifying your heart which is your objective.

#### VERSE 26

*Free yourself from lust, anger, greed, and delusion. Meditate on who you are. Ask of yourself: Who am I? The fools who fail to understand the self are caught even here in hell-fire and suffer torture.*

कामं क्रोधं लोभं मोहं  
 त्यक्त्वाऽत्मानं भावय कोऽहम् ।  
 आत्मज्ञानविहीना मूढाः  
 ते पच्यन्ते नरकनिगूढाः ॥

A desire wells up in a man's heart. He thinks that he can be happy if that desire is satisfied. He exerts himself to the utmost for that purpose. But there is no end to the steps on the ladder of desire. And it does not allow him to see the endlessness of his desire. We try to climb up the steps of a treadmill. As we ascend, the steps on the wheel go down. It looks as if we are getting up; but as we get up one step, the step we have ascended goes down; and a new step appears before us. There is no end to the steps and our labour too is equally unending. Till we die, we keep on getting up. It would appear that we can be at rest if we go up one step but it is not possible to be satisfied with it. A fresh desire comes up. This is the way of all desires.

A hindrance appears just when a desire is sought to be satisfied. That causes anger. Anger is the great enemy of man. From it arises hatred. It harms another as well as oneself. The more one feels hurt, the greater is the anger. A disease of the body disappears after it has caused some damage. This is the nature of physical diseases. But anger is of a different nature. It causes affliction continuously without end and, itself grows in the process. It does not abate.

Desires are of various kinds. We would feel ashamed openly to express some of them. We pro-

claim some of our other desires with pride. Both types of desires grow by what they feed on. They are insatiable, always wanting more. Feed the desire; it becomes more hungry. The hunger is unappeasable.

There is a limit to the power of the senses which crave for pleasure. The senses may become powerless; but the desire continues. This is the unfortunate and surprising truth. Desire persists wanting satisfaction even when it is impossible. That is why desire is spoken of as a monster, a *raakshasa*.

In Sanskrit the desire for wealth is called *lobha*. The mental agitation which desires sexual indulgence is called *Kaama*. Anger springs from both these sources. And anger is the parent of all kinds of sins. It makes a man commit inconceivable atrocities. It destroys his reason and reduces him to an animal.

The moment an unrighteous desire springs in the mind, at once it must be eschewed. By merely ordering it to go, it will not go. The mind must be diverted to something else. Other good thoughts will bar the entry of evil thoughts into the mind. This is the secret of the nature of the mind. Man's mind travels all over the world. But there is no room in it for two thoughts at one moment. If a good thought lodges in the mind and engages it completely, the other will get automatically pushed out. Profiting by this secret of the nature of the mind, one should try to get rid of evil thoughts and desires. If we yield to desire even in the slightest measure, we are lost. If we think: 'My desire lies concealed in my heart; no one need know about it', and thus if we fail to realise

the danger, we shall be ruined. We become its slave. It will stick to us like a leech. Once a thought obtains a place in the mind, it easily takes the shape of action very soon. Even if it remains dormant as a thought, that impure thought itself is a sinful thing. It will foul the pure heart and spoil it. It will foul the temple of God and pollute it.

The verse speaks of four things, *Kaama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha* and *Moha*. Of these, *Moha* is the wrong value that we give to things, not knowing what is good and what is evil, what is desirable and what is repulsive, like a child or an inexperienced man or woman buying things in a bazaar taken in by the outward appearance of the objects which are displayed. Even so, we stray into evil ways abandoning the proper path which would yield real happiness. We hanker for the praises of our fellow-men. We know that these are empty words; yet, we believe there is something good in them and strive hard to obtain them. Other things too are of the same kind. *Moha* signifies the profitless pursuit of things unaware of their real nature and lack of value.

*Kaama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha* and *Moha* are the various forms of the evil spirit known as Desire. Desire refers to the pleasures of sense-satisfaction. What are condemned are desires which are contrary to *dharma*. One need not get rid of desires that are not opposed to *dharma*. The desire and the zest that we feel to do our duties in our life in the world are not *kaama*. That kind of desire (which is in tune with *dharma*) is not condemned. Such desire is a part of God Him-

self. It is the soul force in our inner being. It is a part of the Supreme Sakti that is co-extensive with the cosmos. Speaking to Arjuna in the Gita, Sri Krishna said:

'If you see in men energy devoid of wrong desires and evil impulses, know that that energy is I Myself. If you see in men's minds desire not opposed to *dharma*, know I am that desire.'

All good desires not opposed to *dharma* should be looked on as a part of God Himself. There is one thing more to be noted. This too has been emphasised in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Because one finds he cannot get rid of all vice, one should not desist from making endeavour. If the mind is turned to right ways, even if sometimes it is not effective in the intended manner, that effort itself will do good on the whole. Sri Sankara wants us to get rid of all faults. If we do not succeed, it is enough that we have made the effort; to that extent we shall benefit. We may be deceived by an evil thought; but the effort to counter one such thought will rescue us from ten evils. Like exercise of the body, this mental exercise strengthens the mind. This is a great secret of nature.

Sri Sankara also shows the way to make this effort. "Ask yourself" he says, "the question: 'Who am I?' and think about it". If this inquiry often engages the mind, then there will be less room in it for desire and anger. If we keep constantly reminding ourselves of the true nature of the *atman*, we will acquire the strength to bear the troubles of life with fortitude, and anger will vanish. Sorrows will decrease.

On the contrary, if desires, greed and anger are allowed to grow, life itself will become unbearable; grief and sorrow will increase; the strength of the soul to withstand them will wane and present life itself will become a hell. *Inaana* is indispensable for those who have renounced the world; it is essential also for householders who lead a family life. In fact, they need it a little more.

### VERSE 27

The previous verse brought out that without true knowledge, life in this world so much mixed with sorrow will become a hell. Knowledge of the self will give strength to bear the cares and sorrows of this life. Sri Sankara proceeds to tell us how to obtain this true knowledge of the self.

*Sing the Gita, and the thousand names of God;  
Continuously meditate on Lakshmi's Lord;  
Turn the mind to the company of the good;  
Give away your wealth to the needy.*

गेयं गीतानामसहस्रं  
ध्येयं श्रीपतिरूपमजलम् ।  
नेयं सज्जनसङ्गे चित्तं  
देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम् ॥

*'He who dwells in the heart of those who think of Him ceaselessly—the half of whose body is shared by His consort'—sang Maanikkavaachagar.*

*'Meditate without break on the Lord of Lakshmi'* says Sri Sankara. Call Him by whatever name you

like—‘*The Supreme Truth that is the Mother*, ‘*He half of whose body is Uma*,’ ‘*The Lord of Lakshmi*,’ ‘*Sree-pati*’—all these are names given by devotees to one identical Supreme Being. Do not get lost in the delusions and irritations of theological disputes which speak of Siva being different from Vishnu, and of Uma being different from Lakshmi.

Pining to see God and ‘meditating on His form,’ are all the endeavours to focus one’s mind and heart on God. The sign of true devotion is ceaseless thought of God.

Sri Sankara says: When your mind is drawn to something evil, seek then the company of the good. You will escape from the evil, whether you are in physical company with them or you think of them in your mind.

If you have wealth, says he, spend it in a really fruitful way. What manner of spending will fill your heart with true joy? Make it fruitful by bestowing it on the needy. The greatest joy that wealth can bring is that which arises when you part with it for the poor and wipe their tears. The satisfaction of squandering it by buying goods in a bazaar is as nothing, compared to the joy one gets by helping the poor with it. This verse proves clearly that the *Bhaja Govindam* Song sung by Sri Sankara is intended pre-eminently for the householder. *Deyam deenajanaaya vittam*, ‘Help the needy by giving them your riches,’ was not addressed to the *sanyaasins*. It could not be addressed to them. This verse succinctly shows the way to a purposeful life.

Sri Sankara says: Read and recite the Gita. And sing the thousand names of God. What is the object of this two-fold instruction? It is that the learning which will make a mere scholar of you will be of no avail. To be qualified to sing the sacred names of God, there must be devotion in the heart. Even if there is a little of that devotion, it will increase in course of time. One must read holy books with a mind full of devotion. Without devotion, one cannot get at the real purport of a holy book. Do we not leave our footwear outside the temple gate when we go in? Even so, before we take up a holy book to read we must put aside the tendency to search for faults. We must begin the reading with devotion. Those who read the Gita with devotion will find much of value in it. Those who are research-minded and have no devotion will see in it confusion and repetition and many faults. Careful reading of the Gita will give you knowledge of Sanskrit. That is all. Mere reading without devotion will not avail. If we read with devotion, we will not be tainted by the pride of scholarship. On the other hand, our hearts will be filled with humility, with love and with real joy.

A brief recital of the lesson which the Gita teaches will bring out the full meaning of *Bhaja Govindam*. The Lord explains the delusion of the body in the first part of the Gita. As the soul and the body are intertwined with each other, the real significance of the "I" is not clear to us. A man thinks that he is the same as his body. Happiness is identified with the satisfaction obtained when eating. That this is wrong is the first lesson which the Gita teaches.

The pleasure which the senses give end quickly. More often than not, it leads to grief. Such pleasure causes a craving which is insatiable. Realise this truth; do not attach importance to the pleasures which come from the senses; try to attain equanimity of mind. That alone is true joy. That is the first instruction of the Lord. The body is but a garment to man. Even as it is cast off when it becomes worn out or torn, and another garment is put on, so too the soul gets into another body when one is discarded. Death does not mean the end of the soul. Think of your body as you would the clothing that you wear. The 'I' that we speak of is immortal. It is something eternal. After teaching this, the Lord proceeds to instruct about a good life. He explains the truth of the way of renunciation extolled in the sacred books.

No living being can live without work. By nature, it will be involved in some activity or other. Therefore, the renunciation which the sacred books speak about is the renunciation of the desire and not the giving up of action. It is not possible to give up action altogether. The only possible path of renunciation is to lead a life free from sensual pleasures and selfishness. Do every action as a form of worship tendered to God. That is renunciation, says Sri Krishna in the Gita.

*'They are free who are free of desire'* says the author of the Kural.

To 'renounce' is to give up attachment. Do not seek to give up the activity that is appointed as your duty. Every act should be done as the fulfilment of

a duty; it should be done in a spirit of absolute unselfishness. That is the highest *sanyaasa* which every one can adopt. That is the clear message of the Gita.

The essence of milk is the ghee in it. Even so, the ghee in *sanyaasa* is the giving up of attachment. It is this giving up of attachment to the fruits of action and not negation of action that is true giving up. It is idle to try to renounce action. What must be renounced are desire and attachment. Do your duty only for 'loka sangraha', for the welfare of society. Do it without thought of self-interest. Perform all your actions in a spirit of dedication to God. That is the essence of the Gita.

All the actions that a man does are the results of his inborn tendencies. Those tendencies function of their own accord. To try to by-pass these native tendencies will be futile. What a man can do is only to turn them into good channels.

Desire envelops the heart putting on several disguises. The heart should be defended like a fort. If the enemy gets into it in the form of desire and captures it, then all is lost. Does not the whole kingdom get into the hands of an enemy the moment he captures the capital city? The heart is the capital city; so, defend the heart, emphasises the Gita in the third chapter.

Desire is the enemy of man. The mind which is the capital fort must be defended against this enemy's entry. If that fort is properly defended, then all will be well. This is the cardinal teaching of Sri Krishna to Arjuna.

How can we do away with attachments? What are the means to it? Tiruvalluvar shows the way:

*Let attachment to Him who has no attachments be your ONE attachment. That attachment will help you to free yourself from other attachments.*

'He who has no attachments' is God. If His grace is sought with a heart which melts with devotion, all power will be at hand. To be free from the attachments that must be given up, there is one invaluable attachment, and that is clinging to the feet of God; with that attachment, all other attachments can be got rid of.

Devotion to God is the highest means to get rid of worldly attachments. Without it, all effort to be free from attachments and desires will be in vain. Cling securely to the Holy Feet; Don't let them go; and you will be saved, as Maanikkavaachagar sang in the *Tiru-vaachakam*.

## VERSE 28

Of all the delusions that hold sway over man, that which makes for his greatest undoing is the sex craving. This crude animal impulse in the body is like fire. If controlled, it will serve man like fire. Uncontrolled, like fire again, it will destroy and devastate completely.

The Prime source of the universe is the Supreme Substance, one and only Reality, abiding for ever. It splits into the transitory many and manifests itself

as the diverse objects which make up the world. The diversified many are ceaselessly striving to become one again. These are the forces of attraction which scientists explore and explain. The attachments which govern man are also the same unifying force. Wind and water, various liquids and solids have split into many forms from the primal Reality and are subject to the drive to regain unity. The dried up plants, grass and shrubs in the forest and the oxygen everywhere are waiting to combine again. At a favourable opportunity, these come together and the forest is enveloped by fire. Life is the process of the recombination of many things that have separated. The oxygen that we inhale when we breathe becomes one with the flesh of the body and burns the body. That is bodily heat. Everyone knows that heat is produced when quicklime and water combine. One object differentiating into many and the many becoming one again are the results of chemical action. The healing of a bruise in the body by flesh and skin growing together is also an instance of such coming together.

Similar is the attraction between the mother and the infant that has issued out of her body. The force of attraction between two living things is the delight that we all enjoy diversely as friendship and love. When complete identity has been reached, then there is no sense of *other*, no occasion for endearment; there is no life. It is the state of lifelessness in which all force is extinct. Delight resides in the intermediate stage where there is an urge to combine.

The force of attraction between the male and the female is only an instance of this universal urge. It

is a natural urge of great power. If coal and air combine, there arises a heat under which even iron melts. Of similar power is the sexual urge also.

If this natural urge is controlled, it is family life. Dharma, wealth, joy, all spring from it. At home we cook food over a fire, eat it and are happy. If the same fire exceeds its limit, it can destroy the home and reduce it to ashes. Dam a river, canalise it to flow into irrigation channels, the water combines with the seed and soil and yields a rich harvest, prosperity and happiness. But if the flood is allowed to run unbound-ed, it will deluge the fields and destroy the crops. Even so is the attraction between male and female, which is one of the great forces of Nature. Controlled, it gives domestic felicity; if given free rein, complete ruin will result.

Domestic life is like canalising the flood of a river, making it irrigate the fields, raising crops thereby and enjoying prosperity. It is like subjecting fire to diverse human purposes. If we do not keep the force of attraction under control, and allow it to have unbridled play, it will devastate. Forbidden intercourse may appear to be easy and pleasant. It deceives and ultimately ruins life. This has been clearly brought out in the oldest books. But it is difficult for a man to become wise by book-learning. The physical urge confounds the intellect and leaves it helpless. Sri Sankara says:

*One easily takes to sexual enjoyment;  
then, alas! comes disease!  
Even seeing death ends all,  
men do not give up sinful ways.*

सुखतः क्रियते रामाभोगः  
 पश्चाद्धन्त शरीरे रोगः ।  
 यद्यपि लोके मरणं शरणं  
 तदपि न मुच्चति पापाचरणम् ॥

There are many good things which can give pleasure in life. One must learn to spend one's days turning the mind to them. If one turns in daily life to things which are good and useful, and finds delight in them, the mind will not then think of the crude pleasure of sexual intercourse. It all depends on practice. Even when one mixes in the society of women and converses with them, one must control the sex instinct, forget the physical body and learn to live in their company in approved ways. Does not one enjoy the company of one's beloved mother, sisters or daughters, talking and playing with them? Do we not find great joy in the midst of our friends? In like manner, we should move with women, forget animal thoughts, and learn to seek delight in a cultured manner. This is the mark of civilization.

In this matter, we may learn a great deal from the ways of the people of the West. They have attained perfection in this art of living in the company of women better than we. For men and women to forget their sex is an art to be practised and learnt. When men and women come together among us, our people's minds turn at once to the impulses of the flesh. Such irrepressible urges are comparatively less among westerners. Climatic factors are said to be the cause of this. I do not accept this explanation. Our way of life and culture are different. This is the chief cause. When

there are many worthwhile ways of obtaining pleasure, we stupidly pursue mere sexual union and get lost.

Reading, singing, painting, dance, drama, sweet speech, humour, the enchanting river, heaven kissing mountains, luxuriant gardens, the blue sky,—how many are the beauties of Nature! They are all given to us to enjoy and to take delight in them. We have no eyes or ears for them; we do not avail ourselves of them. But we mistake a silly act as a source of great joy and, in the process, damage our body and our soul. We make nothing of this delightful world and content ourselves with a little physical act that makes for some little physical pleasure. We let go big righteous pleasures which can be obtained without effort, and go in quest of sensual pleasures which are odious and sinful. It all depends on what we have set our heart upon. If it is turned to right ways, we shall be saved from shame and sin. If we allow the mind to stray even for a little while into forbidden grounds, it will overpower us and drag us into the pit. Sri Sankara sang only what everyone knows very well and I too repeat it with anguish.

### VERSE 29

After briefly referring to ruining oneself by going in quest of sexual enjoyment, Sri Sankara speaks about the craving to acquire wealth. This verse should be read keeping in mind what Sri Sankara said in the second verse. There it was said: "Live by what you have earned by your own labour; you will be happy. Eschew the greed for more and more wealth. You

cannot be happy that way. The thirst for wealth is a thirst which can never be quenched." That stanza was:

मूढ जहीहि धनागमतृष्णां  
कुरु सद्बुद्धि मनसि वितृष्णाम् ।  
यल्लभसे निजकर्मोपातं  
वित्तं तेन विनोदय चित्तम् ॥

Once again, Sri Sankara warns us about the greed for wealth.

*Wealth makes for your undoing. Reflect on this always. Verily I say there is not the slightest happiness at the end of the pursuit of wealth. The wealthy come to fear even their sons. This is what has happened again and again everywhere.*

अर्थमनर्थं भावय नित्यं  
नास्ति ततः सुखलेशः सत्यम् ।  
पुत्रादपि धनभाजां भीतिः  
सर्वदेषा विहिता रीतिः ॥

One may derive happiness from anything, but not from the amassing of wealth. There is no objection to earning to make a living. But what Sri Sankara speaks against is avarice, the hunger to make more and more money. Even in regard to it, Sankara here advances a good worldly reason. As wealth increases, the desire to amass more of it will also increase. It breeds pain and misery; it gives no satisfaction. Further, one becomes anxious about its safety. Getting wealth and care for its safety grow together. It is not that we want to guard it only from thieves and cheats; even one's own son becomes an enemy and a source of fear for the miserable man who has amassed wealth.

The son is spoken of here as only an instance. Close relatives and others become a cause of fear. Natural love is disrupted. This happens in every country. Why go in quest of such a thing which poisons domestic relationship? Cast it off, says Sri Sankara.

*'Deyam deena janaaya vittam'*

said he in the 27th verse. If you have wealth, give to the poor and earn happiness thereby. It is only by giving to other persons that one obtains real joy. Sri Sankara says: "Do not increase your grief and anxiety by storing and hugging your money and increasing your miserliness."

Those who have studied economics can explain the nature of love of wealth. Money is a means to an end. It is not an end in itself; it is not a source of happiness by itself. There is a limit to the extent of money that each man needs. If that limit is exceeded, the result will be oppressive weight of the excessive money and anxiety on that score.

What we seek is happiness. Forgetting this, we believe that the bundle of currency notes itself is happiness and become its slaves. In the past, money was at least in the form of gold and silver. We could hold it in our hands and feel it. Fools could feel an exhilaration finding the money fill their doubled palms. Even this is not possible now-a-days. Wealth is now merely paper-money, bits of paper on which something has been printed. No, it is not even that. It is only an account of what some one else holds in the Bank and benefits from. You look at the paper where this is recorded and feel satisfied by it. At the end, you will go to the Nowhere stretched out on two bamboo sticks.

Your money will not accompany you. You cannot see your sons wrangling over the accounts of your assets. But sure as anything, they will quarrel over it. With all this in mind, Sri Sankara says, *artham anartham*: Wealth makes for a man's undoing. The play on the Sanskrit word *artham* gives an edge to the warning.

You may say: "All this is an old story: no one will agree to it." But, because one does not agree with a truth, it does not become untrue. What Sri Sankara says is not what is untrue. *Artha* really makes for *anartha*. Let us reflect on it every day. There is no happiness in merely amassing money; it is only a source of unending anxiety. Give away to the poor and feel the joy of giving away.

What exactly is the reason why you hoard money? You may think: 'My son is a simpleton, or my daughter is indigent. Money will be a support to her after I die.' This shows you do not know the way of the world. If you enquire about the experience of the helpless people to whom money was left, you will realise that there is no truth in this justification for hoarding money. You will learn that deceitful people gather round the rich but hapless men and women who have come by money, defraud them of what they have and ruin them in the process. It is foolish to think that everything will be all right if you leave behind a lot of money. Experience belies this hope.

Sri Sankaracharya does not advise against making wealth. The purport of his advice is this: 'Do not delude yourself into thinking that you can secure everything with money; do not ruin your life for it. Do your

duty without undue and foolish attachment; do not become a miser'. A miser does not really hold his money. The money holds him. Sri Sankara does not object to a householder properly earning money without becoming a miser.

### VERSE 30

*Regulated breathing and sense control, discrimination of values between the eternal and the transient, japa and meditation sinking the conscious into the unconscious—attend to these things with care, with great care.*

प्राणायामं प्रत्याहारं  
नित्यानित्यविवेकविचारम् ।  
जाप्यसमेत समाधिविधानं  
कुर्ववधानं महदवधानम् ॥

'Pratyahara' means holding back; that is controlling desire and keeping the senses under check as horses are restrained by drawing the reins and pulling at the bridle.

The main concern of a devotee is to see that the senses do not play unrestrained. Bhakti alone will give one the power to check the senses. A man may be ever so intelligent; but if it does not help him to sit in guard over his senses, it will not make for *jnaana*. Enlightenment will come only if we offer adoration with

faith unto God and implore Him to give us the required strength to control our senses.

If the senses are controlled, that victory itself gives a rare joy. It is for this that the teachers have prescribed several means. Japa, dhyaana, reading the scriptures, praanaayaama, austerities, all these and more are means to this end. Even if our efforts do not give us immediate success, we should endeavour without giving way to despair.

“You” are not the body. You are the inner Person. The external form is certainly care-worthy; but it is the mind that must be primarily attended to. The mind is the seat of all our thoughts and activities. It must be guarded very carefully. As an alert army guards the citadel keeping the enemy out, intelligence must be ever awake and keep guard on the mind. The function of intelligence is to discriminate between the true and the false, between reality and appearance, between the permanent and the impermanent—attend to these things with care, with great care, says Sri Sankara, repeating himself, in order to emphasize the importance of using intelligence to control the senses and guarding the mind against straying.

### VERSE 31

This is the last verse of the *Bhaja Govindam* hymn of Sri Sankara.

Our body and heart are the temple of God. It is our duty to keep them pure and guard them from defilement. Our great ancestors tell us the means to this

end. They have taught us in person and through the sacred writings they have left behind. Their teachings are for all time. We should endeavour our utmost; making mental obeisance to these great personages, we should resign ourselves to God's will.

*Trust yourself wholly to the lotus feet of the Teacher;  
Freed from the shackles of samsaara;  
With your senses and mind controlled in this manner,  
You will see the God residing in your heart.*

गुरुचरणाम्बुजनिर्भरमंकतः  
संसारादचिराद्ग्रुव मुक्तः ।  
सेन्द्रियमानसनियमादेवं  
द्रक्षयसि निजहृदयस्थं देवम् ॥

In the 27th verse, Sri Sankara said:

*Sing the Gita, and the thousand names of God;  
Continuously meditate on Lakshmi's Lord;  
Turn the mind to the company of the good;  
Give away your wealth to the needy.*

गेयं गीतानामसहस्रं  
ध्येयं श्रीपतिरूपमजस्तम् ।  
नेयं सज्जनसङ्गे चित्तं  
देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम् ॥

“Put your faith in the Guru; your whole faith; you will be freed from the cares of birth and death,”

says Sri Sankara. It is not possible these days for everybody to receive instruction from a *guru* in person. The practice of being directly instructed by a *guru* has almost ceased. But howsoever enlightenment is acquired, it comes only from a *guru*. A book may serve as a *guru*; even the sight of a temple tower may be the occasion for the dawn of the spirit, and the tower itself then becomes the *guru*. An elephant-faced form, or the figure of Hanuman carved on stone, or any form or symbol may help to bring about the beginning of true knowledge. Thus anything may serve as a *guru*. If we strive earnestly with devotion to it, surely we will obtain liberation.

Some will object and ask: 'Are we to worship clay and tree and stone?' God is everywhere. It is therefore folly to look down upon lifeless objects. We have not yet discovered all the secrets of lifeless things. If our devotion enters into a lifeless object, it acquires enormous power. If we recite the songs of the Aalwaars and the Naayanmaars, we shall realise this truth. If we are ever in doubt and without faith, like a vessel without a captain, we shall be tossed about in the sea of life by the winds of doubt and disbelief.

*'Thou, Supernal Being! In thy grace thou camest as guest and sat in the lowly hut of Thy servant!'* exclaimed Maanikkavaachagar. The 'lowly hut' is the good man's heart. The Supreme Being resides in it. It is not necessary to go about searching for Him elsewhere.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa told a story. One night a farmer was sleeping in a shed. He woke up and he wanted to smoke a cigar. In the dead of night he went to a friend in a neighbouring shed and woke him up. The latter came out and asked him what the matter was.

"I wish to light my cigar; will you give me a match-stick?" he answered.

"Fool!" replied the friend, "you carry a lantern in your hand. Forgetting it, you come to me at the dead of night! Why don't you light your cigar from the lantern?"

"Oh! True! I entirely forgot about it" said the first farmer.

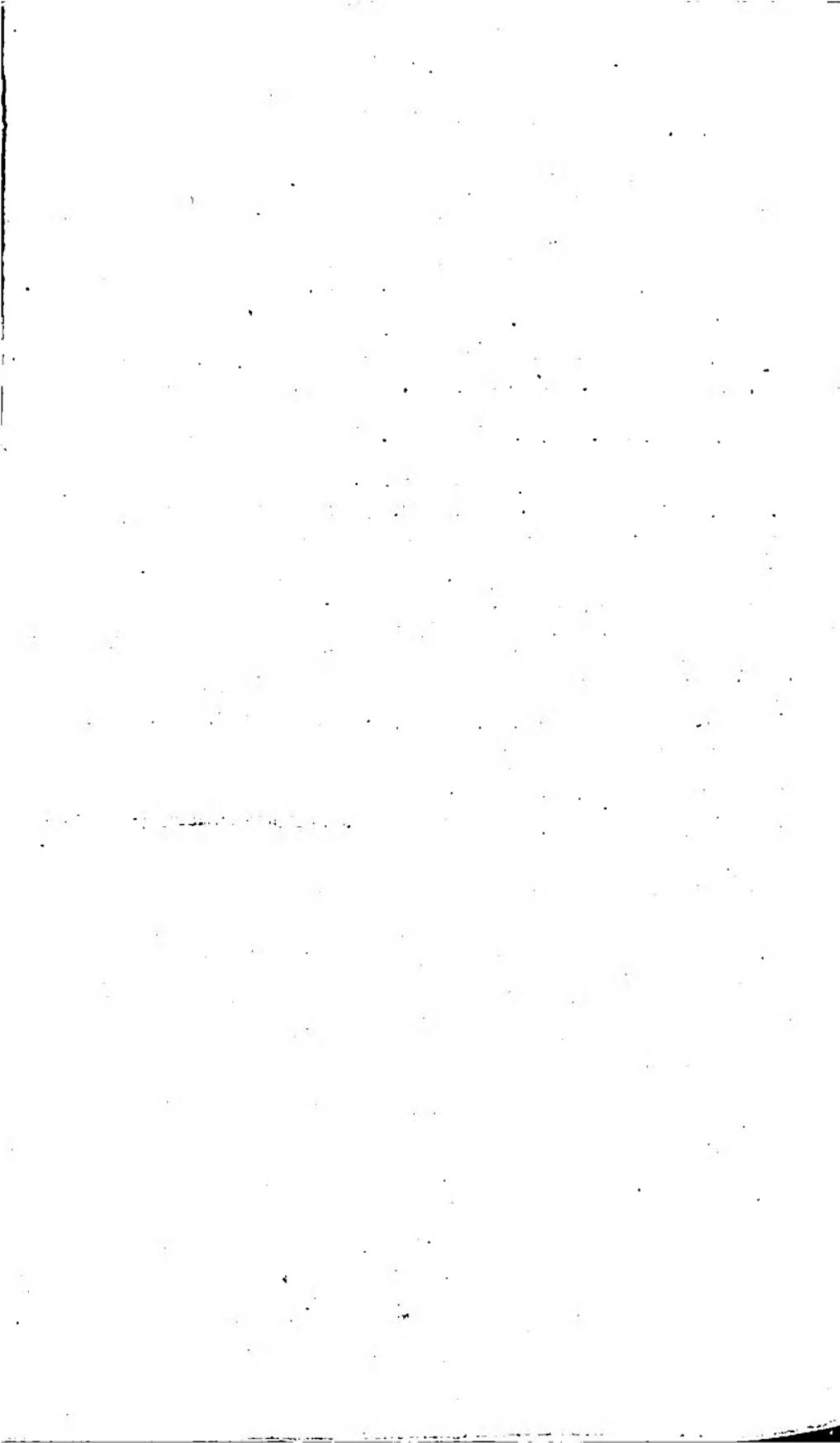
God is in our heart like the lantern in the hand. Forgetting this, we wander about seeking Him in other places. Sri Sankara refers to this lamp in the heart in his last verse. *Nijahridayastam devam* refers to the shining Deity seated in our own hearts. If only we control our senses and our hearts and tread the path of virtue with faith and devotion to the Supreme Being, we need nothing else. By that very process, we attain light and obtain a vision of the dazzling lustre inside us. Sri Sankara ends his *Bhaja Govindam* with this assurance.

If we seek Govinda's grace, we shall succeed in keeping our senses in check.

Human society is based on the principle of co-operation. That principle is Dharma. If avarice and sin get hold of men, that principle is shattered. Men

will not have faith in one another. Everyone will have to live in dread of others and be afflicted by anxiety and hatred. Co-operative life will come to a halt. Everyone will be unhappy. Dharma and *bhakti* are society's precious assets. Having allowed these precious assets to be lost, we suffer in various ways. To rectify this sad state of affairs, unconcerned about what others do or do not do, each one of us must act according to the dictates of his conscience—that is the command of the God in the heart. If we do so, even as little drops of water make a big downpour, *dharma* will grow, and society and the country will prosper.

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# BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

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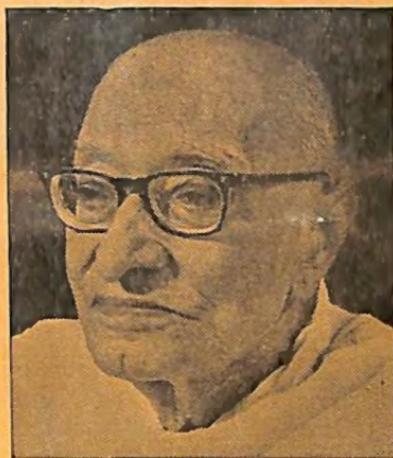
The Academy teaches four foreign languages, viz., German, Russian, French and Spanish.

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#### THE AUTHOR

CHAKRAVARTI RAJAGOPALACHARI, popularly known as "Rajaji" or "C.R.", is a great patriot, astute politician, incisive thinker, and one of the greatest of living Indians. As a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, as an ardent freedom-fighter, as Chief Minister of Madras, as Governor of West Bengal, as Home Minister of India and as the first Indian Governor-General of India he has rendered yeoman service to India and left an indelible impress on our contemporary life.

Rajaji's books on Marcus Aurelius, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* are popular. In *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* he displays his inimitable flair for story-telling and applying the moral of stories to the needs of modern times. In the present book *Bhaja Govindam* are given the living Sanskrit verses of the great Adi Sankara, who rejuvenated Hinduism to new heights of moral power. The verses are explained in the style which is Rajaji's own. They are sure to enrich the reader's mind.